



PRESS RELEASE

School Districts to launch Innovation Pathways to Expose Students to Careers and College Coursework

Grant funds totaling more than \$400,000 awarded to four school districts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

5/25/2018

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BOSTON — The Baker Polito Administration today awarded four school districts in the Commonwealth a total of \$433,710 in grants to launch new programs that connect students' learning to a particular career pathway by providing work-based learning experiences, along with rigorous college-level coursework.

The four districts – Nantucket, Northampton, Uxbridge, and Worcester – were awarded the funds and designated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as “Innovation Pathways.” Innovation Pathways are designed to give students coursework and experience in a specific high-demand industry, such as information technology, engineering, healthcare, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

Launched last year, Innovation Pathways are designed to create strong partnerships with employers in order to expose students to career options and help them develop knowledge and skills related to their chosen field of study before they graduate high school.

“Innovation pathways are designed to provide students with opportunities and direction so they can pursue careers in high-demand industries in the Commonwealth,” **Governor Charlie Baker said.** “We are committed to doing everything we can to ensure our students are ready to succeed in the 21st Century economy, and these new career pathways are another way our administration is working to support students with a quality education that prepares them for success in high school and after graduation.”

“Students involved in Innovation Pathways programs will study a carefully integrated series of courses and have work experiences relevant to their industry sector,” **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito said.** “These new pathways will expose more students to STEM-related fields and drive more young people to be interested in careers that are growing rapidly in Massachusetts.”

“Innovation pathways provides students in comprehensive high schools with career-oriented education that is too rarely available outside of vocational programs,” **Education Secretary James Peyser said.** “These new pathways don’t train students for specific occupations, but they prepare them for a variety of educational and career opportunities in a broad industry or sector.”

“Deepening the work that we are already doing to prepare students for success after high school is a key priority,” **Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Jeffrey C. Riley said.** “Innovation Pathways connect what is happening in the classroom with the real world, showing students firsthand what is possible for them after they leave our K-12 system. The individualized, supported planning for college and career that is intrinsic to Innovation Pathways will put students in the driver’s seat and on the path to accessing the 21st century economy. Plus, our commitment to equity ensures that all students will be able to access these new opportunities.”

The following districts received designation and implementation grant awards:

Nantucket Public Schools – Awarded \$139,900 – Nantucket will launch two pathways, in health care and maritime STEM. The school district’s plan creates a tight connection between it’s the two pathways and the island’s labor market needs. The district partnered with local employers ready to offer students experiences in their industries.

Northampton Public Schools – Awarded \$125,495 – Northampton will launch an Information Technology Pathway that will provide skill building and valuable credentials for students, who will take training courses with Tech Foundry, a community-based organization. The school district demonstrated a keen awareness of the region’s IT labor market needs.

Uxbridge Public Schools – Awarded \$28,315 – Uxbridge Public Schools began working with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce a few years ago, focusing on advanced manufacturing. The school district’s new Innovation Pathway will connect students to employers in the manufacturing sector, and provide credentialing opportunities that are highly prized by local employers in the region.

Worcester Public Schools – Awarded \$140,000 – Worcester received designations for four pathways, each well-designed for a different industry sector. Each pathway – Allied Health, Information Technology, Civil Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing – will provide students with career exploration and relevant coursework. The district demonstrated strategic thinking about its assets and created new opportunities for students by developing a plan for students to take some of the technical courses at Worcester Technical High School.

The four school districts awarded grants will begin enrolling students in the new Innovation Pathways programs in the fall of 2018.

Schools that applied for designation for an Innovation Pathways were required to follow five design principles:

- Equitable access for all students
- Guided academic pathway, which, in the case of Innovation Pathways, must relate to one of five specified broad industry sectors
- Enhanced student supports
- Relevant connections to career
- Deep partnerships between high schools and employers or workforce development boards

The competitive implementation grants the four districts have been awarded are made possible through a combination of funds from the Carl Perkins Career Technical Education grant, the state’s STEM Advisory

Council funding, and the funding obtained by DESE from the Council of Chief State School Officers, in partnership with JP Morgan Chase, for its New Skills for Youth initiative. This funding will support the districts’ work as they launch and support their pathways next fall.

The Baker-Polito Administration has proposed nearly half a billion dollars of additional investments for local schools since coming into office, bringing total funding for K-12 education close to \$5 billion, the highest funding level in state history. The administration was also the first to propose and sign a significant down payment on the Foundation Budget Review Commission’s recommendation for municipal healthcare and recently proposed more than \$24 million to address escalating healthcare costs, the single most important recommendation of the Foundation Budget Review Commission. When fully implemented, the administration’s proposal will create the broadest expansion of the Foundation Budget since it was originally adopted 25 years ago. The administration has also focused on increasing the number of early college seats available to high school students and recently announced [five new programs](#). There are approximately 2,400 students enrolled in early college programs around the state.

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